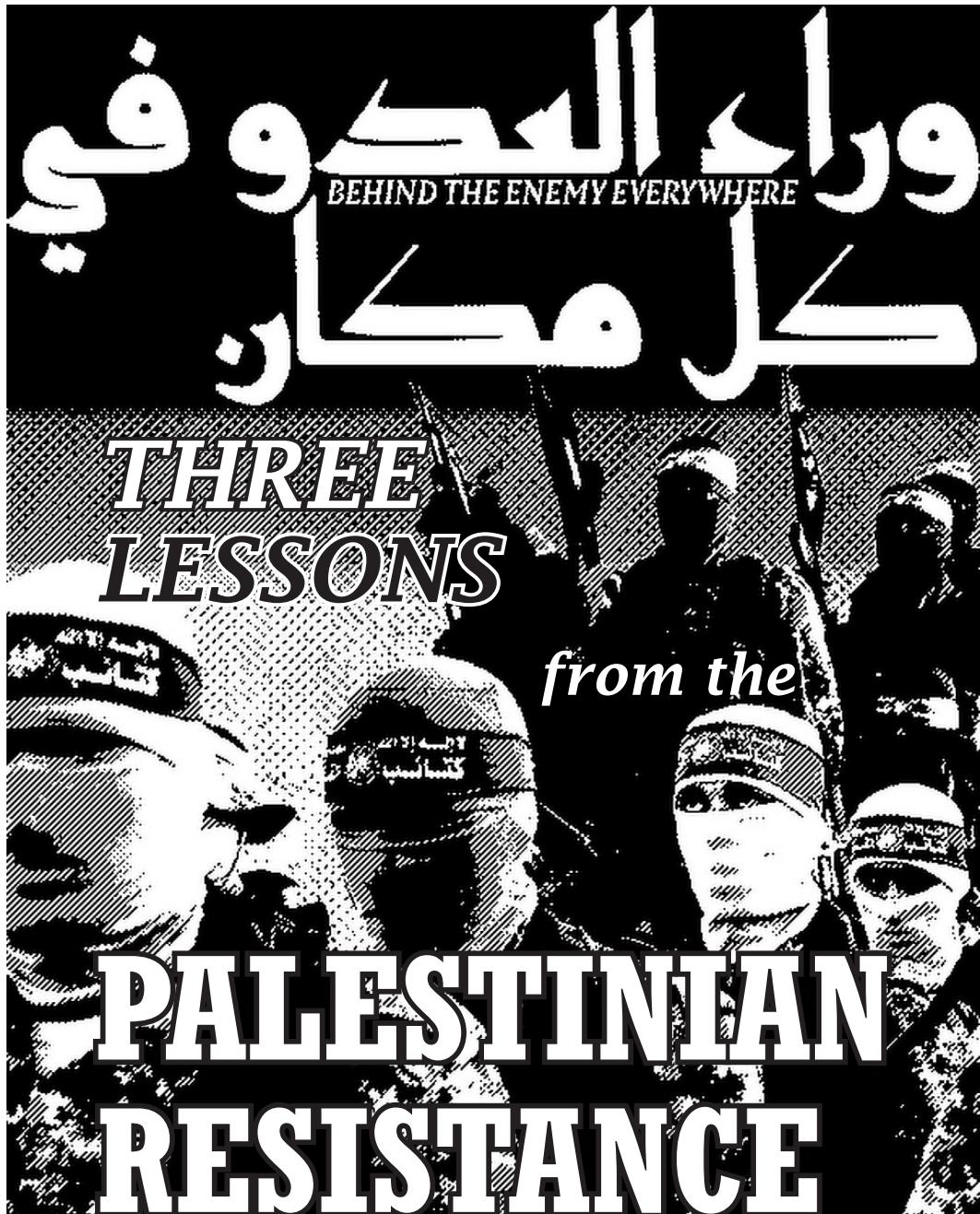


*First and foremost, we should understand Hamas as a Palestinian organization created from the alleys of the refugee camps of Gaza that took on the mantle of armed struggle when the PLO favored limited self-rule.*



by Ameed F.

al-Taher, a prominent former leader of Fateh's al-Jarmaq Brigade during the PLO's armed struggle phase: "We learned war through war."

Attempts at delegitimizing resistance through the lens of qualitative inferiority, then, miss the entire point: resistance is not measured in the contemporary military inferiority, an inferiority that is natural in the context of colonialism; otherwise, colonialism wouldn't exist in Palestine. Resistance should be measured in the painstaking strides taken to improve the efforts of fighters to close the qualitative gap. In this domain, Hamas and the rest of the Palestinian resistance factions have excelled.

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## **Humility is key**

These three lessons teach both Palestinians and anyone in solidarity with them that in approaching resistance, humility is key. We are not fighters, and most of us do not endure even an iota of what the ordinary Gazan has endured—and is enduring—for the past 20 years of siege and wars of aggression. A movement like Hamas cannot be understood within circumscribed theses about containment, the role of "Islamists," nor the futility of resistance by virtue of its qualitative inferiority. First and foremost, we should understand Hamas as a Palestinian organization created from the alleys of the refugee camps of Gaza that took on the mantle of armed struggle when the PLO favored limited self-rule. If we analyze Hamas on this basis, all misconceptions are rectified.

that the fighter stands against the zionist forces not because of some “emotional” or “fundamentalist” tendency, but because they are, first and foremost, dispossessed and slaughtered—deemed a surplus population and so subjected to displacement and genocide.

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### **Lesson Three: Resistance is accumulative**

Amid the Second Intifada, Qassam fighters Tito Masoud and Nidal Farahat unveiled Hamas’s first-ever missile model: the humble Qassam-1, capable of striking a maximum range of 2.5–3 kilometers with a low explosive payload. Afterward, rocket development took on the full attention of the Qassam leadership—with several models of the Qassam missile getting created, each with an ever-increasing explosive payload and range. During the Battle of Seif al-Quds in 2021, the Qassam Brigades unveiled its crown jewel: the Ayyash-250, named after the famous Yahya Ayyash, a prominent Qassam leader and bomb-maker. The missile carried a large explosive payload and was able to strike within a range of 250 kilometers, which constitutes the entirety of Palestine save for small settlements in the Upper Galilee. Similarly, the training of fighters carried on with full force from the period of the Second Intifada up until Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Each war on Gaza revealed a significantly more ferocious and capable resistance force that gained in experience and capacity over time. The results of this trend can now be seen clearly in the audacious military operations broadcast via the videos that emerge from the resistance in Gaza on an almost daily basis. In the words of Mueen

Nine months have passed since the start of Operation al-Aqsa Flood, during which countless massacres conducted with clear genocidal intent have been perpetrated by zionist forces and 70,000 tons of bombs have been dropped on the people of Gaza. It is easy amidst the pain and grief of this genocide to be distracted from the armed struggle being waged by the Palestinian resistance; the very same resistance that has been confronting zionist forces since at least ‘israel’s’ invasion of Northern Gaza in 2004. During the span of this history of resistance stemming back to at least twenty years, the resistance taught us vital lessons for the benefit of our collective consciousness, which this article will highlight.

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### **Lesson One: Mainstream analysis frequently gets it wrong**

Several analysts and writers, including Tareq Baconi, have argued that Hamas’s rule in the Gaza Strip has neutralized its initial revolutionary vigor in the First and Second Intifadas. They went as far as to describe Hamas as being “contained,” with Tareq Baconi’s book bearing that label. Pacification through governance became the name of the game for pundits when describing the history and contemporary reality of Hamas before October 7th. Tellingly, Baconi’s *Hamas Contained: The Rise and Pacification of Palestinian Resistance* was recently translated into Arabic by the Institute for Palestine Studies, bearing the title *Hamas: The Rise of Palestinian Resistance and Attempts at Its Containment*. A new edition in English has also been unveiled, titled *Hamas Contained: A History of Palestinian Resistance*. The name change highlights a

clear pre-October 7th misunderstanding of the ontological foundations of Hamas: resistance.

Whether governance bogged down that foundation temporarily is a story of its own, but what October 7th demonstrated is that any perceived “management” of the “conflict” was pure delusion projected by the zionists. While zionists were busy boasting about their “containment” policy after 2014 and 2021, the Palestinian resistance was in fact busy preparing for the largest and most successful military strike against the zionist project since the Egyptian Army’s offensive to liberate Sinai and the east bank of the Suez Canal during the 1973 October War—and the means to sustain its military capacity and infrastructure in the face of a zionist invasion.

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## Lesson Two: “Islamists” understand the power dynamics of the world too

One severe misunderstanding of Hamas stems from an aversion to its inherently Islamic character. Labeling Hamas as being on the right has been a mainstay position for many leftists, refusing to budge on this issue even after Operation al-Aqsa Flood. Yet even a cursory look at the speeches of Abu Obaida, the military spokesperson of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, reveals a situation in which the so-called “Islamists” possess a fundamental understanding of imperialism and zionism better than many self-described leftists.

In a 14th of January 2024 speech, Abu Obaida stated the following:

“Most of what we’ve been resisting the aggression of the zionists with was made by the Qassam Brigades—from explosive devices, rocket launchers and projectiles, mortars, anti-tank missiles, grenades with their various types, sniper rifles, and even bullets. But our manufactured weapons would not have succeeded against the massive and loathsome amerikan arsenal—an arsenal that we fight through the zionist mercenaries in the field—if not for the greatest industry that we have: the creation of the fighter [...] which no power in the world can stand against his indomitable will to fight the killers of his forefathers.”

What does this tell us about “Islamists” and where they stand? 1) an understanding that this is a u.s.-led war on Gaza and that zionists merely act as a settler-colonial outpost in service of u.s. imperial interests; 2) a view of how popular armed organizing works, highlighting a Gramscian understanding of the role of any popular resistance organization towards its people—creating and facilitating popular institutions necessary for the steadfastness of the people and the fighters despite the limited resources at hand as a result of the blockade. Hamas’s governance, then, should be viewed through this lens: a concerted effort at the creation of a Palestinian fighter endowed with faith in liberation and the necessary training and weaponry to confront the zionist forces; 3) the ontological centrality of Palestine and its liberation across different political tendencies in Palestine and the erosion of a simplistic “left” and “right” dichotomy in the Palestinian revolutionary context through stressing